

Opening Statement of the Honorable Fred Upton
Subcommittee on Health
Hearing on “H.R. 3717, the Helping Families in Mental Health Crisis Act of 2013”
April 3, 2014

(As Prepared for Delivery)

Mental illness affects millions of Americans and their families, yet sadly it is a subject often left unmentioned in Congress and in communities across the country. We are working to change that. Ensuring treatments and resources are available and effectively used for those suffering with mental illnesses has been a priority of this committee throughout the 113th Congress.

Since January 2013, Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee Chairman Tim Murphy has spearheaded a thorough review of all federal mental health programs. The committee held a series of public forums, briefings, and investigative hearings to discern how federal dollars devoted to research and treatment into mental illness are being prioritized and spent. I want to commend Chairman Murphy's efforts, and those of the Ranking Member of the Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee, Diana DeGette, to ensure a bipartisan focus on these vital issues.

To address the gaps discovered in the extensive and wide-ranging examination, Chairman Murphy introduced H.R. 3717, the Helping Families in Mental Health Crisis Act of 2013. The bill addresses issues important in diagnosing and treating individuals with serious mental illness. It would reorient federal funding for mental health to improve the delivery of mental health services and help improve the lives of mental health patients and their families.

I am pleased that two important provisions of H.R. 3717 were included in H.R. 4302, the Protecting Access to Medicare Act of 2014, which was sponsored by Health Subcommittee Chairman Pitts and recently signed by the president. The first provision will help local jurisdictions implement assisted outpatient treatment grant programs, and the second will improve access to community mental health services.

I would just like to add that to those families who have been impacted by mental illness in some form – Congress is aware of your plight and we can do better.

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